



## Mushroom Poisoning Update

Date: August 10, 2017

**Intended Audience:**  All public health partners  Healthcare providers  Infection preventionists  
 Local health departments  Schools/child care centers  ACOs  
 Animal health professionals  Other:

### Key Points:

- (1) Call New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES) for poison emergencies
- (2) Report cases immediately to the Local Health Department (LHD) where the person resides
- (3) LHDs should report cases immediately to the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH)

### Action Items:

- Educate callers to not wait till symptoms develop or look up information on the internet
- Encourage to call 9-1-1 or the Poison Help Line at 1-800-222-1222 immediately
- Advise callers to retain suspect product until advised to dispose
- Ask caller to take a digital photograph of the implicated mushroom next to a coin, ruler etc.
- Remove any remaining parts of the mushroom from the victim's mouth and place in a paper bag
- Ensure case gets reported to the LHD where the person resides

### Contact Information:

For any questions regarding this message please contact Deepam Thomas, Foodborne Disease Surveillance Coordinator ([deepam.thomas@doh.nj.gov](mailto:deepam.thomas@doh.nj.gov)); or at (609) 826-5964.

### References and Resources:

- NJPIES (Plants and Mushrooms)  
(<http://www.njpies.org/Other/Mushrooms-and-Plants.aspx>)

**Background:**

From January, 2017 to present, the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) has received several reports of mushroom exposures. Five of these reports of mushroom poisoning had clear evidence of mushroom toxin ingestion accompanied by a clinically compatible illness that was confirmed by a healthcare provider and thus met the case definition for a ‘confirmed’ case of Mushroom Poisoning. Each of these individuals became sick after consuming mushrooms picked from the wild (e.g., backyards, parks). NJDOH along with NJPIES warn the public to refrain from eating mushrooms they find growing on their lawns or in the wild. Many kinds of edible mushrooms have toxic “look-a-likes.” Eating even a few bites of certain mushrooms can cause severe illness. Some symptoms of mushroom poisoning include intense vomiting and diarrhea, damage to vital organs like the liver and even death. There is no easy way to tell the difference between poisonous and harmless mushrooms. In addition, poisonous and non-poisonous mushrooms can grow side by side. Even experienced mushroom pickers can be fooled at times, so this warning needs to be taken seriously. Children must be taught never to put wild plants, berries, nuts, or mushrooms into their mouths. Keep in mind pets are susceptible to mushroom poisoning as well.

If an exposure should occur, NJPIES recommends to not take chances by waiting until symptoms appear or wasting valuable time looking up information on the Internet. If someone is unconscious, not breathing, seizing/convulsing, bleeding profusely, difficult to arouse/wake up, etc. call 911 immediately, otherwise call the Poison Help Line at 1-800-222-1222. Having a poison expert give you exact instructions for your specific situation can help significantly during those critical first few minutes. Remove any remaining parts of the mushroom from the victim’s mouth and place those fragments and all mushrooms that are in the immediate vicinity of the incident into one or more paper bags (NOT plastic). The poison center will arrange for an expert to identify the mushroom and the center can then provide advice on management depending on the mushroom's identification. A digital photograph should be taken of the mushroom(s) in question. It helps to take a picture of the mushroom next to other objects such as a coin, ruler, etc. to provide a sense of scale.

**Reporting:**

All confirmed/suspect cases of Mushroom Poisoning should be reported to the local health department (LHD) where the patient resides. Contact information for local health departments during business hours can be found at: [www.localhealth.nj.gov](http://www.localhealth.nj.gov). Contact information for local health departments after business hours or on weekends can be found at:  
[http://nj.gov/health/lh/documents/lhd\\_after\\_hours\\_emerg\\_contact\\_numbers.pdf](http://nj.gov/health/lh/documents/lhd_after_hours_emerg_contact_numbers.pdf). If LHD personnel are unavailable, healthcare providers should report the case to NJDOH, Communicable Disease Service (CDS) at 609-826-5964, Monday through Friday 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM. On weekends, evenings and holidays, CDS can be reached at (609) 392-2020.